

RoughRiders denied by Dubuque, 2-1

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Cedar Rapids RoughRiders battled for six months to win the home-ice advantage for the first round of the USHL playoffs, but it slipped away in less than 2 1/2 hours Friday night.

The Dubuque Fighting Saints trimmed the RoughRiders, 2-1, in the opening round of the playoffs before 1,753 fans at the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena.

The RoughRiders will host Dubuque again Saturday at 7:05 p.m., looking to tie the best-of-5 series at one game apiece before the series shifts to Dubuque next weekend.

Cedar Rapids took a 1-0 lead with 12:42 left in the first period when Dylan Steman scored with an assist from Alec Marsh, but the RoughRiders were frustrated the rest of the night. The Fighting Saints effectively blocked shots with their bodies and sticks before the puck ever reached goalie Kevin Reich, who had to make only 17 saves.

Dubuque outshot the Riders, 29-18, including a 15-3 margin in the second period when the Fighting Saints dominated the stanza.

Dubuque tied the game, 1-1, in the second period on a goal by Phil Boje. The visitors took the lead, 2-1, just 34 seconds into the third period on a tally by Karson Kuhlman.

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Marsh had a chance to tie the game for Cedar Rapids in the third period when he eluded a defenseman, reached Reich untouched and made a good fake, but the puck went wide of the net. Marsh banged his stick on the sideboard in frustration with about 11 minutes left in the contest.

Cedar Rapids forward Kevin Shand received an untimely two-minute penalty for tripping with just 2 minutes, 59 seconds left in the game, making it too dangerous for the RoughRiders to pull goalie Danny Tirone for an extra skater at that point.

Tirone did not head to the bench until there were only 32 seconds left in the contest, but the RoughRiders were not able to mount an attack in the final seconds.

Cedar Rapids finished in second place in the Eastern Conference standings this season, one spot ahead of Dubuque to earn the home-ice advantage, but that does not matter now. The RoughRiders will have to win three of the next four games to stay alive in the playoffs.

Dubuque 0 1 1 - 2

Cedar Rapids 1 0 0 - 1

CR - Dylan Steman (Alec Marsh)

DUB - Phil Boje (Shane Kavanagh)

DUB - Karson Kuhlman (Jacob Benson, Seamus Malone)